



**IT'S A CRIME!**  
Do not commit a crime—Attack on Violence Against Women

FROM ZERO TO THIRTY-THREE PERCENT  
**WE FEEL PROUD!!!**



"देश भरिका सम्पूर्ण श्रमिक महिलाहरू एकजुट हौं"  
प्रथम राष्ट्रिय महिला भेला तथा प्रशिक्षण कार्य

२५ फागुन २०-२५  
काठमाण्डौ

जिफुट (के.म.स.)



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## **Women can do! Let them do!!**

“Women take the lead in resolving their problems. National Women’s movement provides an institutional leadership to the process. The problems faced by women workers will not be any different from those faced by others, and would be solved automatically when the common problems would be addressed.” We had this belief when we established GEFONT 24 years ago. But this belief did not help us. No woman could rise to leadership structures from the establishment to the first National Congress.





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## **This has not helped! What to do?**

However, within a month after the First National Congress, GEFONT realised that the problems faced by women workers differ starkly from others and would not be solved without specific treatment. The influence of patriarchy was found to exist even in the world of the work, and to expose it would require a separate structure (of women workers) within the trade union. But we had no idea as to what would the structure look like? We had heard of the South Korean Women Workers' Association (United) and also of the 1903 Women Trade Union League of the United States of America. We also had information of the Indian Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA). What would be our structure? Like one or the other we had heard of? We resolved to learn from other experiences and find a creative solution to our problem. The result was the establishment of a powerful department – the Central Women Workers' Department (CWWD). The Department enjoyed the status of an 'affiliate union' until it was transformed into the GEFONT National Women's Committee.





विद्युत दुर्घटना  
प्रतिरोध कटौत  
कराव  
गार ।  
सुवर्ध

महासंघ  
विद्युत



शान्त  
संविधा

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## Department? How will it work?

Now, GEFONT arrived at the realisation that trade unions should deal with the problems facing women workers, a leap forward from the notion of 'women's problems by women themselves.' At the workplace, capital was dividing the workers as 'they are women' and 'you are men.' Discrimination used to persist in wages and benefits. In many cases, co-workers used to remain silent at the violence against them. In some cases, even their co-unionists used to be a cause of the violence. These were the problems faced by the women as workers, which should, therefore, be addressed by trade unions. But the unions' influence could not reach the women beyond the workplace. To deal with social oppression and related problems beyond the workplace would require the union movement to be connected with the broad women's movement. This reflection led us to the thought of the 'dual affiliation' with union and women's organisations. Now, working women could collectively become a member of All Nepal Women's Association, which until now used to contact the working women on an individual basis.







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## **Number is power. How to shoot it up?**

The first challenge was to break the women-unfriendly environment – at the workplace, union and society – and also the culture of silence (against injustices) within the women themselves. Another challenge was to address the ‘zero’ presence of women in upper & high level committees. A policy-slogan was coined to address this challenge: ‘few but stable, slow but steady’. Soon, we arrived at a situation in which at least a woman became compulsorily present in each committee.





International Working Women  
2012

औं अन्तराष्ट्रिय

रेक दायित्व

यूनियनमा

INVENTORY SERVICE

## Too hard a nut to crack!

Now patriarchy started to appear in various faces and expressions: 'women are unable, we stand for ideological equality, we are not feminist...! Why can't we men do a women's job? We have in fact been doing that!' Our response to the sceptics was – our destiny is not abstract feminism, it is class feminism! Class feminism is a way to free women from exploitation by the men of the same class, standing up in unity of own class. It is a way to establish a progressive social behaviour which promotes equality between men and women in a real sense and also woman makes free from the gendered roles and etiquettes. On indoctrinating this value-direction among male leaders and colleagues, we unleashed a new campaign to speed up a process to promote gender equality.





## **A slogan alone does not help unless the destiny is clear!**

Yes, GEFONT realised so and adopted four crucial policies. The first policy was about the percentage of women's participation in programmes. It mandated at least 25 percent of women's participation in each programme and the same percent of men in women programmes. The 'women 25%' created an enabling environment for women to develop their leadership and the 'men 25%' was to help men internalise what it means to be in a minority. It was in a way a practical application of Paulo Frère - the oppressed planning a compensation scheme jointly with oppressors. Then began the process of capacity development under the 'Top 100 Cadres' programme, in which women activists with basic education and leadership potential were teamed up with men comrades and mobilised.





## There is nothing we, women, cannot do!

The rise of the number of women in union committees was not without some defects. Those in leadership positions had a limited 'figurative' role and the structures were more an 'ornament' than fully functional units. Now, a new slogan was coined to tackle this problem: **not mere representation, but equal participation!** The slogan contributed to breaking the taboo that women should not speak and also boosted up the morale of women that there is nothing they cannot do. To materialise the slogan various programmes and training – such as literacy and language learning classes, computer and skills development training, feminist self defence training, leadership and collective bargaining training, and trade union management training – were organised. After the change of 2006, when '33 percent women representation' became a national resolve, GEFONT further improved its slogan - "women participation: inclusive and proportionate".





विप्लव

पढ़ने उमरका भविष्य  
विद्यालय

सम्बन्धी  
निर्माण





## **Focus on 'numerical rise' did not make a difference. We then got into the issues concerned!**

Feminism was linked with class issues. And, in the first phase, GEFONT concentrated on discriminations existing in the world of work. Inequalities prevalent in 'opportunities', 'wages', 'benefits', 'promotions' and 'access' were tackled both through awareness and concrete reforms. Then, issues related to, among others, occupational safety and health; reproductive health and maternity protection; and, HIV and AIDS were taken up. A documentary entitled 'Obstacle yet to overcome' was produced featuring the affliction of uterine prolapse. And a slogan "Balancing Work, Family and Life" was coined to explain 'equal' rights, 'prosperous' life and 'dignified' work.





जतिबखत पनि

नमोदन किन

नगरेको होला ?

## **Solidarity as the basis of achievement!**

These achievements are the result of our hard work. And, national and international support and solidarity has played an appreciative role in these gains. International NGOs like Committee for Asian Women (CAW); international trade unions like KAD/3F, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Global Union Federations (GUFs); specialized UN agencies like International Labour Organisation (ILO); and others trade union solidarity organisations (TUSOs), including the Left International Forum (LIF), are our reliable ramparts. They have assisted us in many ways to help us arrive at the point we are now. Our own creation-‘Women Workers Assistance Fund’ is the institution to provide relief-oriented social assistance package. The ‘Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality and Promotion (TUC-GEP)’ and the tripartite ‘Gender Committee’ have been formed with support from – and participation with – various unions, networks and even employers’ organisation and government officials, such as in the case of the tripartite committee. Solidarity has been the key to success on these fronts.



महासंघ (जिफन्ट)

प्रतिनिधि परिषद

क तथा वैचारिक अन्त



## **We feel proud!**

In two decades, we moved from 'zero' to 33 percent. In this achievement we doubtless feel proud. The methods adopted to get to this point were following, which we think were true to our needs.

- Organise a series of dialogues on what aim to fix to ensure gender balance in the union and how to ensure the balance in union leadership and decision making structures
- Collect statistics on the status of gender representation in internal structures of unions, labour market, state structures and other related areas; analyse the situation on the basis of the statistics; and, monitor the actual status of implementation
- Hold interactions among union leaders and activists on what steps to take and what processes to follow to ensure gender





अधिकार सुनिश्चित गरौं ।  
अधिक महिलाको  
अधिकार सुनिश्चित गरौं ।

र सुरक्षित कार्यस्थल  
मातृत्व संरक्षणमा  
अधिक महिलाको  
अधिकार ।

महिला अधिकारका लागि रोजिशोटी सुरक्षाको ग्यारेण्टी  
जिन्दावाद  
महामन्त्री

balance; organise wide discussions among all unions to plan and implement specific programmes (such as 'quota' fixation); and encourage them all to take ownership of the proposed actions.

- Promote gender issues in trade unions with commitments from senior leaders to gender equality; develop integrated strategy to promote gender balance; adopt steps necessary to implement the quota programme; and, monitor the progress regularly and periodically
- Educate women activists with leadership potential, provide leadership development training and other support to them; increase the substantial presence of women in leadership and decision making structures; and adopt a mechanism to ensure balance between working hours and the time for union meetings.



अन्तराष्ट्रिय मई दिवस  
नेपाल पौली पार्टि परिवार  
बालाबु औद्योगिक क्षेत्र, बालाबु



अन्तराष्ट्रिय  
सफ



## **Violence does not have its class, race or caste, religion and nationality. But it has a gender!**

Have we touched the peak? No. There is a lot to do. There norms has been a good momentum with regards to gender awareness and inclusion of gender in the workings of union. This is important in its own right. But the additional work women workers do in society has not got recognition. There is no balance between working hours and union meeting times. To put differently, we have yet to achieve a balance between our 'life' and 'work'. Our society and work place are yet to be women-friendly.

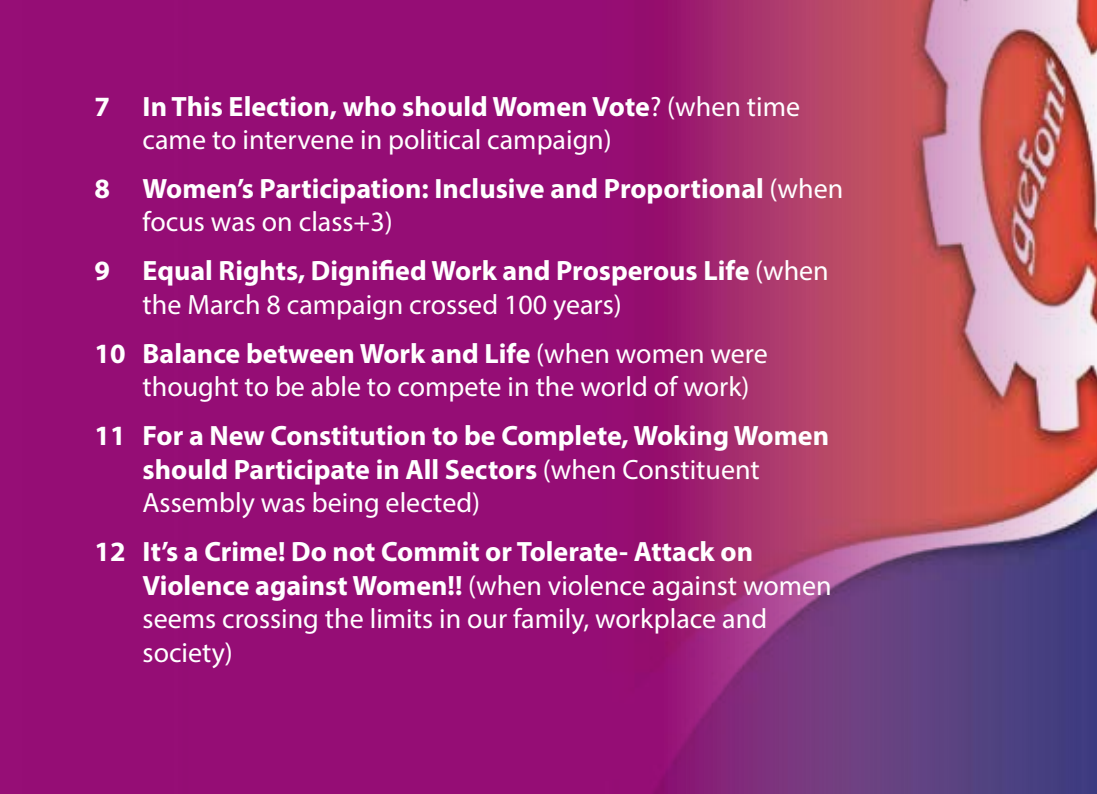
Violence does not have its class, caste, religion or nationality. But it has its gender. Women suffer from varieties of violence in society. In fact violence against women has been a prime issue of the day, and one that needs much of our focused intervention. We have a lot to do. Let us join our hands to tackle this vice head-on. Violence against women is crime. Let's not be party to this crime! Let's not tolerate this crime!!! Let's fight this crime with all might necessary!!!



## FROM A SLOGAN'S PERSPECTIVE

# TWELVE STEPS OF DEVELOPMENT


- 1 Few but Stable, Slow but Steady!** (when women's participation was extremely low)
- 2 Cadre Top-100 Plan** (when the number of women shot up)
- 3 Not mere Representation, Equal Participation** (when GEFONT started to influence other organisations)
- 4 25% Women, 25% Men** (when the divide of 'you' and 'we' widened between men and women)
- 5 Eight March is, of Ours Too** (when March 8 was termed as International feminists day)
- 6 We Women, We can Do everything** (when women's job was treated as inferior one)

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- 7 **In This Election, who should Women Vote?** (when time came to intervene in political campaign)
  - 8 **Women's Participation: Inclusive and Proportional** (when focus was on class+3)
  - 9 **Equal Rights, Dignified Work and Prosperous Life** (when the March 8 campaign crossed 100 years)
  - 10 **Balance between Work and Life** (when women were thought to be able to compete in the world of work)
  - 11 **For a New Constitution to be Complete, Working Women should Participate in All Sectors** (when Constituent Assembly was being elected)
  - 12 **It's a Crime! Do not Commit or Tolerate- Attack on Violence against Women!!** (when violence against women seems crossing the limits in our family, workplace and society)

## TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY: **TIMELINE**

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- 1989 July 20      GEFONT was established
- 1991 March 06-07      The first Seminar on 'Organised women's leadership within the trade union' was jointly held with All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA). In this programme, women delegates from 50 enterprises were participants. Till the date, the issues related to women were supposed to be raised only by the Women Association, not the trade union.
- 1992 March 28-31      The first National Congress of GEFONT was held; however, due to the dilemma whether it was necessary to form any "structure" for Women workers; none of the women delegates were elected in the leadership.
- 1992 May 04      No longer than a month after the first National Congress, GEFONT reached into a conclusion that the issues related to woman workers should be addressed by the trade union itself. Ultimately, the Central Women Workers Department (CWWD) was established with *Swasti Bajracharya* as the founding coordinator.
- 1993 March 08      A separate Workshop was organised for women workers on 8<sup>th</sup> March. A Memorandum was submitted to the

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- Prime Minister of Nepal demanding public holiday on March 8. From the date, the submission of the Memo, on its own or jointly with other organizations, to the Prime Minister of Nepal demanding the public holiday on 8<sup>th</sup> March continued till the holiday notice was published in the national Gazette in 2007. The publication of 'Women Worker' also launched from this year.
- 1993 Oct 29-Nov 11 Women Workers Training in all five Development Regions was organised. A broad interaction was held in the local level to identify the working condition of women workers, their problems and way outs. It was the first time organising such initiatives in the history of Nepali trade union movement.
- 1993 Nov 19 CWWD was restructured, *Bidhya Bhandari* succeeded *Swasti Bajracharya* as the new coordinator of the Department.
- 1993 Dec 03-09 CWWD extended its network. GEFONT hosts the first South Asian Women Workers Workshop in Kathmandu.
- 1994 March 09 Various programs were organized to mark the International Women Worker's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March. With a slogan '*8<sup>th</sup> March*
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- The logo for GEFONT is located in the top right corner of the page. It consists of a white gear shape with a red oval in the center containing the word 'gefont' in white lowercase letters.

## TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY: **TIMELINE**

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- is of ours too'* the demand as to why the public holiday should be declared on the day was circulated throughout the workplace through a poster.
- 1995 March 09 8<sup>th</sup> March was focused against privatization of public enterprises by distributing postcards and posters.
- 1996 May The second National Congress of GEFONT was held. The policies on Women were further polished through the Congress. The Congress decided to expand CWWD up to four Regions (Regional Women Workers Department) and the entire district where GEFONT was active (District Women Workers Department). CWWD was decided to work as a special Department and to be affiliated institutionally with All Nepal Women Association.
- 1996 Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional level Training Workshop concluded. In this course, RWWD were formed in all Regions.
- 1997 March 10-12 The first Women Workers Convergence was organized on 8<sup>th</sup> March. From this year, CWWD began a tradition of publishing annual evaluation of its work on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

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- 1998 Feb 24-28 National Women Workers Trainers' Training programme was organised. All participants were asked to join field visits of the Tea Gardens as an initiation to provide analytical knowledge- what they learn and what was in the ground reality.
- 1998 The campaign of establishing Women Departments in all affiliates accelerated.
- 1999 Aug The analysis and evaluation of the CWWD began from regional levels too.
- 1999 Sept 19-23 The 2<sup>nd</sup> South Asian Workshop was successfully held in Kathmandu. Discussions were held on the problems of women in family, workplace, union, society and government agencies.
- 1999 Nov 13-15 A SWOT analysis of the CWWD was made for the first time in its seven-year span. The overall evaluation was undertaken on the achievements through the decade-long investment of the GEFONT on it.
- 2000 Jan/Feb Card Signature Campaign was launched demanding public holiday on 8<sup>th</sup> March. More than 10 thousand Cards



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collected during the Campaign were handed over to the labour Minister. The Memorandum was also distributed drawing attention of the Members of Parliament.

2000 March 8-10 The programme produced by GEFONT was broadcasted through Radio and aired through National Television for the first time. Special training was imparted for 42 volunteers of 20 districts with a view to forming Federation of Agriculture Workers, where the number of women workers was overwhelming. The trained volunteers were mobilized in the workplace for one year.

2000 Sept 23-25 National Women Workers Training Seminar was held. Following this programme, a sector-based workshop was conducted en-series to sort out women workers' problems; the *Male-dominated Sector workshop* (July 10-11) and the *Service Sector Workshop* (Sept 30-31). Through this year, the system of compulsory participation of at least 25% women in each programme of GEFONT and compulsory participation of 25% men in each Woman related programme was also implemented. The '100 Top- Cadres' Policy was also taken into force from the year onward.



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- 2000 Nov            The evaluation of Women Workers Campaign in Agriculture was conducted (Nov. 13-14).
- 2000 Dec. 29        The first workshop of TUC-GEP (Trade Union Committee on Gender Equality and Promotion) was successfully held. It was formed with a special objective to develop unanimous opinion of the major unions on Gender issue. It is the first Gender Committee in Nepal where the key- male leaders of the three National Trade Union Centres were included as its Member. The Committee identified the Gender Issue of Workplace in ten points.
- 2001 March 08     Promotion of Women Workers Rights Programme was declared. The useful and skilfully created audio-video materials as a means of increasing awareness like video (*Together for Equality*), audio song (*Remembering Women Workers*) and Multimedia (*We the Woman*) including others were published. This campaign was regularly continued for ten years.
- 2002-Feb 12        The extensive National Conference on "*Solidarity for Gender Equality*" was organized. Through this conference, Larger



## TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY: **TIMELINE**

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- Women Workers Network was established including the representatives of trade unions, government authority and the employers' organisation.
- 2002 March 14 The Civil Code was amended for the 11<sup>th</sup> time. The amendment rectified various aspects of discrimination over the working women. Mobile Childcare Centre was also initiated in the construction sector. The bilingual documentary "*Towards Bright Horizon*" that depicts the history of the participation of women in trade union movement was also produced and screened during the year.
- 2002 Sept 30 Countrywide awareness campaign on rights of women in the context of the 11<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Civil Code was conducted.
- 2002 Dec16 For ensuring gender equality and enhancement, a tripartite declaration was issued under the participation of three trade union centres, entrepreneurs' organization and government authority. A Sub-committee was formed under the Secretary of Labour Ministry in order to monitor it. The decision was also reached to invite the

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- representative of ILO country office as an expert in the Sub-committee.
- 2003-March 15-17 The Seminar of South Asian Women Trade Unionists was concluded under the theme of 'Identifying Common Gender Agenda for Prosperous South Asia'.
- 2003-June 21 2<sup>nd</sup> National Women Workers' Conference was successfully held. The revised GEFONT gender- policy was endorsed. The target of 15% women participation in the National Committee and other structure of GEFONT through 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress was proposed.
- 2004 Dec 10 Women Worker Social Assistance Fund was established through the initial personal contribution of four women trade unionists of Denmark (KAD/3F) and GEFONT contribution of NRs. 50 thousands. The member of CWWD, in case of calamities and/or serious health treatment to be given, a subsidy of maximum NRs. 5 thousand through the Fund.
- 2006-June 25 3<sup>rd</sup> National Women Workers' Conference held. The discussion was focused on identifying challenges and



## TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY: **TIMELINE**

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obstacles for developing women-leadership, agenda of 1/3 participation of women and gender discrimination in labour laws and new provisions to be included in the law for equality.

- 2006 Aug 31-Sep 1 Cross-sectors Extensive Women Workers Conference was held. It brought forward the slogan of 'Women Participation: Inclusive and Proportional'. GEFONT had invited representatives from women, peasants, youths, and student's organisations together with other co-unions of the world of work in this conference.
- 2007 Jan 16-17 TUC-GEP set future plan along with an evaluation of its work. Since the Common women committee was formed in the joint platform of trade unions (JTUCC), literarily TUC-GEP is defunct. Therefore, it became the last programme of the TUC-GEP.
- 2007 July 16-17 Organizing a workshop among the women workers, "12-point proposal on gender equality to be included in the new constitution" was prepared. Like in the previous years, Adult Classes along with literacy programmes

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- were run. Various programmes on women health were also conducted. A documentary entitled '*Obstacle yet to overcome*' was also produced & screened amidst national function where President of CA was guest of honour.
- 2008 Sept 20-22 The 2<sup>nd</sup> Seminar of South Asian Women Trade Unionists was concluded. Internalizing the ILO Slogan "The Essence of Decent Work: Gender Equality", the theme of the Seminar was '*Together we will achieve, Decent Work and a Better South Asia*'
- 2008 Throughout the year leading women activists were also involved in the skill training like computer know-how and English language.
- 2009 April Through the fifth National Congress of the GEFONT, the CWWD was transformed into National Women Committee. 33% women are compulsory in each structure under GEFONT since this year. The statutory provision was made to nominate president of the Women Committee as the ex-officio vice-president of the National Executive Committee. The provision was also made to compulsory



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appointment of one woman as the Office Bearer out of four Office Bearers. A male and a female representative must be elected in the workplace where both men and women work.

2010-March 08-09 4<sup>th</sup> National Women Workers Conference was held under the theme of *'Equal Rights, Decent Works and dignified Life'*. The program was inaugurated by the then PM of Nepal marking the occasion of 100 years of the International Women Workers' Day.

2011 March Programmes in this year were focused on *'Work- Life Balance'*. GEFONT started marking the Day on Violence against Women on 25<sup>th</sup> November. Programmes were also launched being focused on safe migration throughout the year. The notice was published in the Gazette that the male also gets holiday on 8<sup>th</sup> March through this year.

2012 March 08 8<sup>th</sup> March was celebrated under the slogan of *'Equal participation in family- responsibilities, compulsory participation of women in trade union'*. Most of the

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- programmes of the year were focused on domestic works and works based on home.
- 2012 The research reports related to domestic workers, audio/video and various publicity and campaign materials were made public.
- 2012 June-17 A memorandum was submitted to the Labour Ministry for the safe foreign employment to women workers.
- 2012 Dec. 02-03 A workshop organised to discuss on possibility of code of conducts on violence against women.
- 2012 Dec Training on Gender mainstreaming (Dec 24-25) was held and Participatory Gender Audit of Gefont (Dec 26-30) was concluded.
- 2013 March 08-09 Fifth National Women Workers Conference is focused on Violence Against Women. The theme of the Conference is **"It's A Crime! Do not commit or tolerate – Attack on Violence against Women!"**
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- The logo for Gefont is a red gear with the word "gefont" written vertically in white inside it. The gear is partially visible on the right side of the page, set against a background of red and blue curved shapes.

## When the Hen Crows...

*Here, there are women like sky  
Here, there are women like sun  
Here, there are women like dawn  
They create new life  
They creat history  
They creat future  
The life, the history and the future  
Created by women are our hopes  
We have been longing for  
A hunma life and a humane society  
Throughout the times of  
Struggle, pains and creation*

*Bythe oppressed daughters, their mothers  
And the mothers of the mothers in this land.*

*How long have we suffered  
The false interpretation,  
“When a hen crows, the house will ciollapse”  
How much have we struggle against?  
Now we can voice our demands  
Without any hesitation  
We, in the name of women.  
Creators of the future, declare,  
“when a hen crows, she lays an egg.”*

*“When a hen crows, the house will ciollapse”  
is a traditional saying in Korea as well.*



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